

- Pragmatic Language Disorder
- Oral Expression Difficulties
- Language Memory Difficulties

Marcus, age 12:4



## History and Referral

**Marcus** was age 12:4 and enrolled in the sixth grade. His teacher reported that Marcus's overall reading and math skills were in the average to below average range based on curriculum measures and classroom performance. She indicated that his perseverative behavior and difficulty with social communication often impact him in the educational setting. His parents followed up with a medical assessment by a developmental pediatrician. The result was referral for further assessment, including speech and language evaluation targeting pragmatics language.

The ORS was completed by the teacher before standardized tests were administered. In the area of listening, the teacher reported that Marcus sometimes had trouble understanding others. The teacher also reported that Marcus often had trouble deciphering meaning from the facial expressions, gestures, and body language of others. In the area of Speaking, the teacher reported that Marcus often had difficulty answering questions, asking questions, expressing thoughts, describing events, and engaging in conversations with others. No significant problems were reported in reading and writing except that Marcus was unable to expand details when writing. The teacher further reported that Marcus had a flat affect and that it was difficult to gauge his interest and level of understanding.

## Referral Questions

The student was referred for a complete speech and language evaluation to determine the following:

1. Did the student manifest a language impairment?
2. If a language impairment is present, what are the patterns of strengths and weaknesses?
3. What implications does the profile of strengths and weaknesses have on the student's ability to access his education?
4. What intervention recommendations can be derived from the student's profile?



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# Test Results

The following scores were obtained from administration of CELF-5.

## Case Study Overview of CELF-5 Scores for Marcus

Core Language and Index Score	Standard Score	Confidence Interval	Percentile Rank	Confidence Interval
Core Language Score	86	80–92	18	9–30
Receptive Language Index	88	81–95	21	10–37
Expressive Language Index	83	76–90	13	5–25
Language Content Index	91	83–99	27	13–47
Language Memory Index	82	75–89	12	5–23

Test Scores	Scaled Score	Confidence Interval	Percentile Rank	Confidence Interval
Word Classes	10	8–12	50	25–75
Following Directions	7	5–9	16	5–37
Formulated Sentences	7	4–6	16	2–9
Recalling Sentences	7	6–8	16	9–25
Understanding Spoken Paragraphs	9	7–11	37	16–63
Word Definitions	7	5–9	16	5–37
Sentence Assembly	8	6–10	25	9–50
Semantic Relationships	7	5–9	16	5–37
Pragmatics Profile	4	3–5	2	1–5
Reading Comprehension	10	8–12	50	25–75
Structured Writing	13	9–17	84	37–99

Marcus's Core Language Score of 86 (confidence interval of 80–92) placed his overall language performance within the average range. The Receptive Language Index score of 88 (confidence interval of 81–95) is also within the average range. The Expressive Language Index score of 83 (confidence interval of 76–90), is in the below average range. The Language Content Index score of 91 (confidence interval of 83–99) is in the average range. The Language Memory Index score of 82 (confidence interval of 75–89) indicates performance in the below average range. Based on the profile of the Index scores, Marcus would be considered to have a mild language disorder involving his expressive modalities and his ability to apply working memory to linguistic concepts.

With the exception of Pragmatics Profile, Marcus's scaled scores range from a low of 7 to a high of 13 and all are within the average to below average performance range. Marcus's performance on the CELF-5 tests was consistent with the performance reported by his teacher on the ORS. The teacher reported few concerns about listening skills

and much more concern about Marcus's speaking skills. Analysis of item response patterns for the CELF-5 tests indicated clear ceiling effects with few variations in the scores assigned below ceiling. This indicates that the scores can be considered representative of Marcus's current language status.

Marcus's literacy levels were examined with the CELF-5 Reading Comprehension test. He obtained a scaled score of 10, placing his performance in the average range for Reading Comprehension. A comparison of his performance on Reading Comprehension (scaled score of 10) and Understanding Spoken Paragraphs (scaled score of 9) indicates that Marcus's linguistic knowledge demonstrated on Understanding Spoken Paragraphs carried over to his reading comprehension skills. On Structured Writing, Marcus obtained a scaled score of 13 placing him in the above average range. This indicates that Marcus's syntactic knowledge demonstrated on Sentence Assembly and Formulated Sentences carried over to his written language skills.

Marcus's pragmatics abilities were assessed with the Pragmatics Profile and the Pragmatic Activities Checklist (PAC). The ratings of expected behaviors in the Pragmatics Profile resulted in a scaled score of 4, indicating performance in the very low range. Weak pragmatic skills were confirmed during participation in the PAC activities. The Pragmatics Profile and the PAC revealed strengths in Marcus's ability to understand nonverbal communication. The examiner observed that Marcus had an extensive vocabulary, was willing to take risks, but that he produced messages that were often redundant in nature. His affect was flat, and he typically responded in a monotone voice. It was also noted

that he rarely tried to keep the conversation going. Results from both measures confirmed that Marcus demonstrated significant difficulty in his ability to engage in appropriate conversational turn taking. Test results also indicated that Marcus had difficulty interpreting his communication partner's verbal messages, as well as producing appropriate verbal responses. Marcus presented with pervasive pragmatic language deficits. Deficits in this area may be attributable to Marcus's difficulty in taking his communication partner's perspective and sharing information within his educational environment.

## Recommendations and Follow-up

The evidence of the student's pragmatics difficulties suggests follow-up observation is necessary in Marcus's classroom environment. Marcus may benefit from classroom-based intervention, possibly within an RTI format. Based on test results, Marcus may benefit from structured and unstructured language tasks that specifically address his weaknesses in language memory, oral expression, and pragmatics.



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